

policy, and implementing tough, fair immigration reform.

This week, we will focus the Senate's attention on S. 5, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act. We will be led by Senators HARKIN, KENNEDY, and FEINSTEIN. Democrats and Republicans joined together last year to pass legislation that would have made stem cell lines more available to scientists, while at the same time strictly regulating how they could be used. This legislation gives hope to millions of Americans.

The actions of the Senate and House gave hope to as many as 100 million Americans and tens of thousands of Nevadans who suffer from cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, spinal cord injuries, heart disease, and Lou Gehrig's disease. Sadly, President Bush vetoed that bipartisan bill, and as a result we must take on this urgent cause again. This week, we will debate the Stem Cell Research Enhance Act and will fight to see that it becomes law.

Following debate on the stem cell bill, we will turn our attention to reducing drug costs for senior citizens. The flaws in the Medicare drug program are well documented, but many of them can be traced back to one simple fact: The current law puts drug companies and insurance companies ahead of seniors. Regardless of whether we supported or opposed the law that created the Medicare drug benefit, all of us want to make the program work better for seniors and people with disabilities, and right now they are paying too much because the Federal Government is unable to negotiate lower priced drugs. S. 3, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 1967, will fix that injustice by making it easier for the most vulnerable in our society to afford the medicine they need.

We are being told by the minority that they are not going to allow a provision to be changed in the law which says Medicare can negotiate for lower price drugs. Why? I guess they and the President believe that HMOs and insurance companies and all these managed care entities deserve to have an advantage over Medicare. It is unfair. Medicare should be able to negotiate for lower prices and, in effect, compete with these money-hungry HMOs and insurance companies.

Next, we will move to energy legislation that will improve our national security and protect our environment. For the past several weeks, gas prices have risen dramatically. Last week, they rose 11 cents—in 1 week. The average price I heard in this morning's news is about \$2.90 a gallon. In places in California, it is approaching \$4 a gallon for gasoline. One reason for this spike is the fear premium caused partially by the administration's inept foreign policy. Another reason is the empty words and unfunded promises of the administration's shortsighted energy policy. President Bush's budget choices have robbed the Treasury of

the funds we need to invest in a better, more sustainable energy policy, and his friends in the oil and energy industry have failed to fill the void by investing in alternatives to oil.

I am hopeful in the coming weeks the Senate will consider legislation that will put us on the right track toward increased production and use of renewable fuels, renewable electricity, and energy-efficient products, buildings, and vehicles. This will improve our energy security and reduce the risk of global warming.

After energy policy, we will focus on the challenge of comprehensive immigration reform. We all agree America's immigration system is broken; our borders remain unsecured. Our laws remain underenforced. Eleven or twelve million undocumented immigrants continue to live in the shadows. Last year, the Senate passed bipartisan immigration reform that would have fixed our broken borders. Unfortunately, the legislation fell victim to partisan politics in the House and to inaction by the President, so we must readdress the issue—again. We will start with a bill that takes a tough and smart approach to fixing the borders, cracking down on enforcement, and laying out a path to earned legal status for undocumented immigrants already here and contributing to our society.

In January, we promised the American people a new era of open, honest Government. We promised a new direction that will put families and working people, college students and senior citizens first. We also promised a new course in Iraq that honors the service of our men and women in uniform. Heaven knows we have tried, but the President is charging forward with the same mindless strategy in Iraq that the Pope calls a continual slaughter. Defined in the dictionary, slaughter is to kill in a bloody and violent manner and in large numbers. This slaughter must end. For the sake of humanity and our country, it should be no more.

In these first few months, we have made progress. As we begin our third work period, there is much left to be done, but I am confident that with a continued commitment to bipartisanship, we will rise to the challenges ahead and answer the call for renewal of the American dream.

It would be wrong for me not to end by saying we have had the cooperation, most of the time, from the minority. It has been most helpful. We could not have passed these bills without the help of the Republicans. I have a warm, cordial relationship with my counterpart, Senator MCCONNELL. He is easy to work with. We have had some procedural bumps in the road, but we have worked through those, and as a result of this we have been able to accomplish some good things for our country.

I apologize to my colleagues for taking the time I did, but I ask that there will be a full hour for morning business—is that true?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. REID. I thank the Chair.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business, not to exceed 60 minutes, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each, the first 30 minutes under the control of the Republicans and the second 30 minutes under the control of the majority.

The Senator from Wyoming.

IRAQ

Mr. THOMAS. Madam President, I will take my 10 minutes this morning. I wanted to speak a little bit about the Iraq supplemental bill which is really the issue that is pending. We are not going to be able to get to it today, but nevertheless it is the pending unfinished business.

Despite what the majority leader has indicated, it is too bad we have not been able to move this forward. The Senate went on Easter recess, of course. The majority stressed the importance of completing the bill before the end of March and getting it to the President without delay. Democrats in the Senate, of course, have blocked votes on the amendment to supplement the part that we could have—where they indicated they wanted to speed up the process. Regrettably, we are now on the 64th day since the President submitted his request to Congress, and we have still not sent up a bill.

To make matters worse, we don't even have a conference committee in place to work out the differences between the bill that has been passed in the Senate and the bill that has been passed in the House. The Senate is ready for a conference for this bill. The committee of the conferees has been announced, and they are prepared to get this work done. On the other hand, the House of Representatives is on recess and no House conferees. So we are still held up, and will be, on the bill that is really important and needs to be moved. While our troops at home and overseas are facing funding uncertainties, the Democratic House leadership is taking a couple of weeks off. This makes it very difficult.

We talked about what we are going to accomplish. It is interesting to accomplish it in the Senate, but it has to go through the House and the Senate and then to the President to have the impact the bill is supposed to have. The Speaker of the House should call the Members back to Washington to complete the supplemental bill and get it to the President by the end of the week. I would like to associate myself with the letter that was sent to the Speaker of the House asking her to call the body back to Washington.

It is important to remind people that our troops did not take the week off.

Our military leaders are in the best position to know the needs of our troops. They have left no doubt that the funding is urgent and needed without strings and pork.

Last week, my staff met with General Mattis and General Lehnert of the U.S. Marine Corps at Camp Pendleton. For those of you who do not know General Mattis, he is a straight-shooter, my kind of marine. He offered a grim assessment of the barracks the marines will be returning home to. His report concluded that conditions are unacceptable for the marines and sailors who have just returned from the combat environment. Repairs and maintenance are needed. The service is ready to act. Unfortunately, the first items that will be cut when funding begins to dry up will be this maintenance. So, even though certainly we will have to get money to the troops, this delay will have an impact on the troops who are returning. More and more marines and their families will be seeking counseling, and there will be cuts in the counseling programs that are available for our returning service people. These programs may not be available if we do not move forward. Of course, as I said, it has been 64 days since the start of this issue. Certainly we need to take care of our marines' mental health and see to it that they are not living in dilapidated barracks and we are going to have to work hard to get this done. It is very simple. We can do that.

Over the Easter break, I joined with others welcoming home the Wyoming Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery Unit. Let me tell you, to get these troops back home was one of the great events I have seen in a very long time. Like those who came home before them, I am so proud of their service and their sacrifices. Given the lack of passage of the supplemental that was submitted to Congress 64 days ago, I am not sure their return would have happened if it had been scheduled for a few months from now.

Our first and only priority should be the funding to our troops in the field. Unfortunately, the emergency legislation is larded up with pork and extraneous measures. Not only does the legislation attempt to tie the President's hands by micromanaging, but the majority is trying to push through pet projects at the expense of funding our troops.

When the House does return and finally appoints conferees, I hope this Congress does the responsible thing and sends the President a clean bill. Our troops deserve that the Congress give them the funding they need to succeed.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Utah.

THE ECONOMY AND SYRIA

Mr. BENNETT. Madam President, during the week we were back in our home States getting acquainted with

our constituents, there was more good news on the economy. I had expected to spend my 10 minutes here talking about the economy. I will do that briefly, but I intend to move to another issue which came out during the week of recess which I think deserves comment.

The news came out about the number of new jobs created in the month of March and a revision upward of the number of new jobs created in February. Without going through the details, I will summarize what this news really means with respect to the recovery as a whole.

Ever since the economy started its recovery after the recession that began in mid-2000, we have created, now, more than 150,000 new jobs every month; every month, 150,000 new jobs over a period of more than 40 months. That sounds impressive, but let's go behind the figures and look at what is really happening in the economy to understand how impressive it should be.

Oversimplifying but taking a number that describes what is happening, every month approximately 900,000 Americans lose their jobs. Their company goes out of business, the company cuts back, things change, they retire and the job is not replaced—whatever it may be, every month roughly 900,000 jobs disappear.

In order for us to be able to say accurately that we have created more than 150,000 new jobs every month, that means the number of new jobs created every month is not 150,000, it is 1,050,000, to produce a net of 150,000. To produce 1,050,000 new jobs every month for over 41 months—which is the record of this economy and this recovery—is pretty extraordinary. Frankly, it is unusual. We take it for granted in America because it happens in our dynamic economy almost automatically. If you go to other economies in the world, you find that this does not happen. Unemployment is high, is stagnant, is continual.

I was in Europe a month or so ago, and picking up an international paper, it said: The German economy is coming back. Unemployment is now down. And then there was another headline that said: The American economy is fairly stagnant; unemployment is stable.

We found, during the break, unemployment hit 4.4 percent. It is as low as it was at the end of the last economic boom. The Germans were excited that their unemployment record was now out of double digits, getting down into the 9, maybe even 8 percent level. That is exciting for them.

The American economy is doing well and does not get the credit it deserves. Perhaps it is the political atmosphere in which we operate, but we keep hearing this described as the Rodney Dangerfield recovery.

It is strong. It is powerful. It is creating new jobs. But if you listen to some, it is in a state of constant disaster. The figures that came out during the break made it clear: The economy

is not in a state of constant disaster; the economy is still strong.

However, there was something else that came out during the break which I think deserves some comment. I turn for my text in this matter to a source that is not usually thought of as being particularly friendly to Republicans. I am talking about the Washington Post editorial page.

I was a little stunned, out in Utah dealing with my constituents and getting reacquainted with some real people who have different kinds of priorities than those we normally have here in Washington, to read about Speaker PELOSI's venture into the Middle East. I picked up, via the Internet, an e-mail, a copy of the editorial that ran in the Washington Post.

I think it deserves some review. It is entitled: "Pratfall in Damascus," and the subhead is: "NANCY PELOSI's foolish shuttle diplomacy." The opening paragraph begins this way: House Speaker NANCY PELOSI offered an excellent demonstration yesterday of why Members of Congress should not attempt to supplant the Secretary of State when traveling abroad.

I have traveled abroad, Madam President, as have you. I went abroad when Bill Clinton was the President of the United States, and I traveled with Phil Gramm of Texas. I do not think anybody has ever accused Phil Gramm of Texas of being particularly fond of Bill Clinton. Every country we went to where Senator Gramm was leading the delegation, the first place we went was to the Embassy. Senator Gramm said over and over again to these ambassadors, every one of whom had been appointed by President Clinton: We are here to help you, Mr. Ambassador, or Madam Ambassador. Tell us what we can do in this country where you are representing the United States that can be of value to you. How can a congressional delegation of varying sizes—usually fairly large—be supportive of the work you are doing in this country?

Then when we met with leaders of the country, whether it would be the chief of government or the chief of state, sometimes both, or lower level officials, we always had in mind what we could say and do to support the Clinton State Department's position as represented by the Clinton Ambassador.

I have traveled with the majority leader, Senator HARRY REID. We have gone to various places in Europe and in South America. In every instance, Senator REID went out of his way to make contact with the U.S. Ambassador appointed by President Bush, and to make sure our delegation was properly briefed by that ambassador to make sure we did not do something stupid out of our ignorance while we were in that particular country.

I contrast that behavior by Republicans traveling abroad, behavior by Democrats traveling abroad, with the kind of behavior we saw from Speaker